United Nations

A/ES-10/546–S/2012/111

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
24 February 2012

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 23 February 2012 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

In follow-up of my letter of 15 February 2012 (A/ES-10/545-S/2012/90), I must draw your attention to recent provocations by Israel, the occupying Power, declaring further construction of illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The illegal construction and expansion of Israeli settlements already under way and the approval of plans for even more massive construction constitute deliberate breaches by the occupying Power of its obligations under international law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, and blatant defiance of the international community's demands for a complete cessation of all such illegal actions. Moreover, as is universally recognized, such illegal actions are paradoxical to, and gravely undermine, the two-State solution to this conflict.

Yesterday, 22 February 2012, Israel announced the approval of at least 600 more units in the illegal settlement of "Shilo", which is located deep in the Occupied West Bank, between the cities of Ramallah and Nablus. It was also revealed yesterday that the occupying Power has given approval to the attempts to retroactively "legalize" another 200 units in the illegal "Shvut Rachel" settlement, which is adjacent to the aforementioned settlement. With every inch of Palestinian land stolen by the occupying Power and every single stone laid for illegally settling Israel's civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, it becomes clearer and clearer that Israel is not interested in the kind of peace settlement endorsed by the international community as a just and lasting settlement, i.e., the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, an historic compromise accepted decades ago by the Palestinian leadership. Moreover, such actions belie Israel's claims regarding its seriousness vis-à-vis the peace process, the very objectives, principles and spirit of which it totally contradicts with such illegal colonial practices.

These deplorable actions must be roundly condemned by the international community and more pressure must be exerted on Israel, the occupying Power, to

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cease these actions forthwith. Israel must be held accountable to its legal obligations as well as to its responsibilities and commitments under the Quartet road map, which oblige it to completely freeze its settlement activities and to dismantle all settlement "outposts". The occupying Power cannot continue to so flagrantly and wilfully violate these obligations without consequence, for this will only result in the further deterioration of the situation on the ground, the further confiscation of Palestinian land and impairment of the Territory's contiguity, and the further decline of the viability of the two-State solution for peace.

While reassured by the strong statements of condemnation against these most recent illegal Israeli actions and provocations, we believe that such statements must be accompanied by serious actions and measures to stem the precipitous rise in tensions and deterioration of the situation on the ground that these actions are causing. We thus renew our appeal to the international community, including the Security Council, to act consistent with international law and United Nations resolutions to bring a halt to this destructive Israeli settlement campaign in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to demand that Israel, the occupying Power, respect international law and the global calls in this regard.

Regrettably, at the same time, with the support and acquiescence of the Government of Israel, extremist settlers continue their rampage throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, provoking, inciting and inflaming religious sensitivities between the two sides. Provocations continue to be made against Al-Haram Al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) and settlers continue to vandalize holy sites. The latest such incident involved a church in Jerusalem, the Baptist Narkis Street Congregation, on which such deplorable and hate-filled slogans such as "Death to Christianity" and profanity about Jesus Christ were sprayed on the walls of the church. This provocative incident follows the vandalism earlier this month, on 7 February, of the Monastery of the Cross, on which "Death to Christians" was sprayed, and follows several such attacks on mosques in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including similar acts of defacement as well as arson. These actions must be condemned and must be seriously addressed, for the continuation of such provocations can only lead to further destabilization of the situation with far-reaching consequences.

I must also draw your attention to the unstable, deplorable situation that persists in the occupied Gaza Strip due to ongoing Israeli military attacks and the illegal blockade, which is nearing its fifth year. On Sunday, 19 February, the Israeli occupying forces launched more air strikes against Gaza, attacking the Zaitoun and Tuffah neighbourhoods in Gaza City, wounding a one-year-old boy, Muhammad Al-Zaharna, along with five other civilians, and causing destruction to Al-Zaharna's home and to an elementary school in the neighbourhood. Such air strikes are regularly carried out by the occupying Power with barely a word of condemnation by the international community, surely fuelling its impunity.

In addition to enduring such traumatizing attacks, the Palestinian people in Gaza continue to suffer the impact of the Israeli blockade, including continued shortages of essential materials, including medical, construction and humanitarian supplies. Fuel shortages in Gaza have especially affected the population in the recent period, impairing the functioning of households and businesses and vital public services, particularly hospitals, endangering the lives of patients. The fuel shortage has been compounded by the destruction of power plants by the occupying

Power, leaving the entire Palestinian civilian population in the area dependent on the only running power plant, which itself is in disrepair and under tremendous pressure to provide needed electricity.

Lastly, I must refer to the occupying Power's continued arrest and detention of Palestinian civilians in the recent period, with many being seized from their homes in the middle of the night by the occupying forces. This has included the re-arrest, on 16 February, of a Palestinian woman, Haneh Shalabi, who had been released in the prisoner exchange in October 2011. Moreover, while we express our profound relief that the plight of the Palestinian man, Khader Adnan — who, as conveyed in my letter of 15 February 2012, has been held by Israel in administrative detention without charge since 17 December 2011 and who had been on hunger strike for 66 days to protest his unlawful, arbitrary detention by Israel — has been addressed and that his hunger strike has ended, we believe that the honourable example of Mr. Adnan's non-violent, peaceful resistance in protest of the illegal practice of administrative detention by the occupying Power, which has been used against thousands of Palestinian civilians over the nearly 45 years of Israel's occupation, must arouse the international community's conscience and compel it to demand that Israel, the occupying Power, cease this and all other such illegal practices by which it continues to imprison, detain and severely abuse Palestinian civilians, including children.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 417 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 15 February 2012 (A/ES-10/545-S/2012/90) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations